Alciphron.

SOME

# REMARKS

ON THE

# Minute Philoſopher.

In a LETTER from a COUNTRY CLERGYMAN to his Friend in *London*.

The SECOND EDITION.

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# REMARKS

ON THE

# Minute Philoſopher.

*Dear SIR,*

I HAVE received the Books you were ſo good to ſend me, have read ſome of them, and return you my Thanks for them all.

It is extremely kind and charitable in you, to give me now and then theſe Proofs of your Remembrance, and your Deſire to entertain me; ſince the diſagreeable Situation of a Country Clergyman with a ſmall Living, not born a Fool, nor educated a Blockhead, is generally ſuch, that his Taſte and Underſtanding are as much above the Company he can keep, as his Fortune and his Circumſtances are below the Company he would keep: And as Reading, in this Situation, is his only Reſource, and Books his only Companions, he has no more Commerce with the Living, than with the Dead; and is no otherwiſe acquainted with any of the ingenious Men among his Contemporaries, than with thoſe who lived Two thouſand Years ago.

This being my Caſe, in this obſcure and remote Corner of the World, where Literature is as great a Stranger as Politeneſs, I need add nothing more to convince you that theſe Remittances, from time

to time, which you are ſo good to make me, are the only Amuſements my Solitude allows.

You deſire to know my Opinion of the *Minute Philoſopher* in particular; and tho' my Opinion is not worth aſking, or worth giving, yet ſince you inſiſt upon it, as a Tax I am to pay for the Continuance of your Bounty, I ſhall, for fear you ſhould ſtop your Hand, give you my Thoughts of this Performance, crude and indigeſted, juſt as they occur; and will tell you plainly, naturally, and ſincerely, without any of the Affectation and Refinement of a Critic, and with all the Freedom and Confidence of a Friend, what I think of the Deſign of this Author; his Manner of purſuing it; how far the Book will anſwer that Deſign; and what Effect I ſhould gueſs it would have in the World.

As to the Style, I think it does not want Spirit; the Diction is raiſed, and tolerably well kept up: He ſeems to have a Flow of Words; but often betrays more Affectation in chuſing and coining them, than is to be found in any Writers, but thoſe who conſult Sound rather than Senſe, and prefer the Harmony of a round well turn'd Period, to the more manly ſimple Beauty of a ſtrong, accurate, and intelligible Meaning.

I conclude, from the many Quotations with which this Work abounds, the pompous Authorities he cites, and the great Number of celebrated Authors which he takes occaſion to mention, that he has Learning, and Knowledge, or at leaſt that he has Reading. I think he ſometimes ſhews Ingenuity, and ſometimes Wit; but that both the one and the other are generally very improperly placed; that he is often unclear, oftener unfair, and always unſatisfactory: That he introduces Perſonages, without preſerving Characters: That he is monſtrouſly and manifeſtly partial, with a Profeſſion of Candor; Rhapſodical, with a Pretence to Method; Inconcluſive, with an Affectation of Argument; and that he has leaſt Perſpicuity, where the Reader will naturally have moſt Curioſity. Which laſt is in my Opinion, an irremiſſible Sin; I think no Beauty can attone for the want of Perſpicuity in Writing; any more than

any

any Virtues, for the want of Charity in Religion: The principal Merit, as well as the original Uſe of Language, being certainly to explain: Thoſe Authors therefore, who analize Propoſitions, till they puzzle, inſtead of illuſtrating their Meaning; do by Words, as Refiners do by Sugar, who, in order to make it look better, deprive it, in the ſame Proportion, of that Sweetneſs which is its only true valuable Property.

But as I am a Clergyman, and a zealous Church-of-*England*-Man; as the Chriſtian Religion is my Profeſſion, my Maintenance, my Perſuaſion, and my Principle; ſo what I can leaſt of all forgive him, is the Prejudice, I am confident, his Book will be of to the *Chriſtian* Cauſe in general. Let his Intention therefore have been never ſo good, I cannot help feeling a very great Reſentment againſt him, for publiſhing ſuch an Apology (as he calls it) for our Religion, as, according to my firm Belief, will go farther towards diſcrediting it, and haſtening its Decay, than any thing that ever was the moſt avowedly and impudently written againſt it.

*The Tale of a Tub*, that turns the whole Syſtem of Chriſtianity into Ridicule; and *the Fable of the Bees*, that ſneers a little at our modern *Reverend and Right Reverend Apoſtles*, who are paid for preaching what they do not practiſe, and propagating what they do not underſtand; are Books from which *Chriſtianity* has not received half ſo dangerous a Wound, as it will do from the Hand of this Friend. Thoſe Wags only ſhew there are a great many ludicrous things to be ſaid againſt Chriſtianity; but this puzzling Zealot will tempt People to believe, there is nothing ſeriouſly and argumentatively to be ſaid for it.

I know, *Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, and ſome other Books of a later Date, which I could name, by controverting ſome of our moſt ancient Tenets and eſtabliſh'd Doctrines, have attack'd the Eſſence of our Religion in a graver way: But the natural Anſwer to thoſe profane Ralliers, and theſe more ſerious Aſſailants, ſhould be, That as there is nothing in Nature which is not liable to Ridicule, in the Hands of Men of Wit, Invention, Pleaſantry, and Humour; ſo there

there is not any Propoſition ſo clear, but by quibbling, cavilling, and playing upon Words, Men of Learning, Letters, and Sophiſtry, may obſcure and perplex it.

Such Anſwers as theſe would do, for the Defence of the Forms, Cuſtoms, and Ceremonies of our Religion, for all the Garniſhing and Embroidery of Chriſtianity; and if they demand of us an Explication of Fundamentals, and a Scrutiny into Eſſentials; pray tell me, Sir, When every body knows we declare its Principles are Myſteries, and that the chief Merit of its Practitioners and Followers is Faith, whether any body but an injudicious, ſanguine Fellow, who loves to hear himſelf prate, would ever come ſwaggering from behind ſuch Entrenchments, and pretend to define the obſcure Circumſtances of the one, or illuſtrate the Objects of the other.

Would any body, who wiſh'd well to the Cauſe, if they underſtood its Intereſt, go this way to work to defend it? Did our *Saviour* himſelf, the *Apoſtles*, the *Evangeliſts*, the *primitive Chriſtians*, or the *Fathers*, ſet us this Example? Does not St. *Paul*, in the Second Chapter of his Epiſtle to the *Coloſſians*, and the Eighth Verſe, expreſly forbid this manner of preaching and defending the Goſpel? *Beware* (ſays he) *leſt any Man ſpoil you through Philoſophy and vain Deceit, after the Tradition of Men, after the Rudiments of the World, and not after Chriſt.*

If the Tenets of *Chriſtianity* were reconcileable to *Reaſon*, why were they called Myſteries? If they admitted of Demonſtration, why would *Faith* be required in its Profeſſors? *Miror quia abſurdum eſt, et credo quia impoſſibile eſt*, are the Words of *Tertullian:* And thoſe who are for leſſening the Abſurdities, and ſoftening the Impoſſibilities, muſt either do it, prompted by the Vanity of Innovation, and a Deſire to alter the Baſis on which our Religion has triumphantly ſtood for theſe Seventeen hundred Years; or from a malicious Pleaſure they would take in endeavouring to depretiate the Virtue and Piety of thoſe well-diſpoſed People, who meaſure their Merit to God by the Difficulty they find in reconciling their Belief to their Comprehenſion; and ſay (like the Learned Dr. *Brown*, in his *Religio*

*gio Medici) That as Faith is our chief Merit to God's Favour, they are ſorry he has made the Objects of it ſo eaſy; and that he would not have the Goodneſs to impoſe ſomething more incomprehenſible than the Trinity, the immaculate Conception,* &c. *that they might ſhow with what implicit Alacrity their ductile Opinions were ready to receive it.*

How many good Chriſtians there are, who believe Enquiry ſo heinous a Sin, that they vow and preſerve as ſtrict a Chaſtity of Mind, as any Monaſtic Votary ever did of their Body: Who would think it as great a Pollution of the one to exerciſe their Reaſon, as the moſt conſcientious *Carthuſian* would think it of the other to propagate his Species; and, like good Proteſtants, imagine they make God Almighty as welcome a Compliment in ſacrificing the nobleſt Faculty of their Underſtanding, as the Papiſt fancies he pays him in foregoing the favourite Occupation of his Body.

And ſurely this is the way of thinking, it is the Duty and Buſineſs of the Prieſthood, at leaſt, to propagate and encourage; it can never be their Intereſt to join Iſſue with heretical Sceptics, and plead *pro* and *con* on Points that leave *all* at Stake, and bring the *whole* into Diſpute. The *Pulpit* ought to do by the *Goſpel*, as *Weſtminſter-Hall* does by the *Law*; which is, to determine by Authority, Preſcription, and Precedents, what is Law; and not to examine the Right which the firſt Legiſlator had to inſtitute it, and make it ſuch.

I am ſo fully convinced of this being the proper Office of a Divine, that for my own Part, when any of theſe cavilling Genius's, who have a mind to hamper us Sticklers for Chriſtianity, talk of *Enquiry*, I always anſwer, *Myſtery*; when they aſk for *Proof*, I cry, *Faith*; if they raiſe *Doubts*, I quote *Authority*; and whenever they mention *Reaſon*, I bid them conſult *Tradition*. By theſe means, fighting with my own Weapons, and never encountering them with their Arms, I always ſtand my Ground, and make my Party good.

I ſtick to the ancient Manner of Diſputing; when Controverſies in Religion uſed to turn upon the different Expoſitions of this or that particular

particular Text; the various Readings in Manuſcripts; various Interpretations of celebrated Commentators; various Opinions of the Fathers, *&c.* Heretofore theſe Points only were debated; all Diſputes were about the Leaves, the Fruit, or the Branches of the Tree: But the modern Monſters of Impiety, are not content with trimming, and pruning, and lopping, but are for ſetting the Axe to the very Root, and felling the whole to the Ground. In this licentious, inquiſitive Age, People are come to conſider, not what is meant in the Goſpel, but whether that Meaning, when it is agreed upon, be worth the Search, or the Goſpel itſelf worth minding; and inſtead of deſiring to have the Doctrines of Chriſt explained, want to have the Divinity of his Miſſion itſelf authenticated. Whereas that is a Point that ought never to come into Play, any more than the King at Cheſs: Whenever they give him a Cheek, your only Reſource is to cover it; and when you cannot cover it any longer, the Game is loſt.

Where therefore theſe riotous Attacks of our Foes, and this imprudent Defence of our Friends will end, I tremble to think. Such new Ways of fighting with Chriſtianity, will, I fear, make ſhort Work; for *Reaſon*, in theſe Controverſies, like *Gunpowder* in War, is an Innovation that will blow up and demoliſh that in a Month, which according to the ancient Methods of attacking, might, like old *Troy*, have held out a Siege of many Years, in Credit and Safety.

This being the Caſe, ſurely thoſe Champions for Chriſtianity, who conſent to meet their Antagoniſts upon ſuch Terms, and accept the Challenge, are almoſt as much to blame as thoſe who ſend it; ſince by entering the Liſts in this manner, if they do not abſolutely betray, at leaſt they very fooliſhly and unwarrantably expoſe, what they ought to employ all their Art, as well as Force, to defend.

If the Author of the *Minute Philoſopher* would ſet forth the Advantages which Chriſtian Countries, for the moſt part, enjoy ſuperior to the reſt of the known World; if he would content himſelf with aſſerting roundly, that it is merely from their Religion that theſe Advantages accrue; if he would inſiſt from the Authority of

the inſpired Expoſitors of God Almighty's Intentions, that God is determined to proſper the Faithful, and confound the Unbelieving; and that the apparent Difference between the Proſperity of Chriſtians and Infidels reſults from no other Cauſe: If he would tell us, that without ſome Religion we ſhould loſe at leaſt one Tie, and perhaps the ſtrongeſt that keeps Order in Society, and Peace among Mankind; and that to theſe ſocial Advantages no Religion leads ſo directly as that of *Chriſt*: If he would ſatisfy himſelf with this manner of declaiming, and not weaken his Aſſertions by aiming at Proofs, he would do well; he would walk in the Paths that were ſet before him, and run no Riſque of loſing his Way. But then let him leave the Diſpute there; let him take all this for granted, and then tell thoſe who would reject the Doctrines of *Chriſt*, becauſe they may have ſome Doubts about his Original, and are puzzled upon the Chapter of *Overſhadowing*, the *Incarnation*, &c. that they are juſt as much in the right to reject and explode, for ſuch Reaſons, the beneficial, noble Inſtitutions contained in the Goſpel, as the *Egyptians* would be to make no Advantage of the Overflowings of the *Nile*, becauſe Naturaliſts and Philoſophers may have had ſome Diſputes about its Source.

Suppoſing, for the ſake of Argument, (what I am otherwiſe far from allowing) that the ſanguine Followers of *Chriſt*, in the early Days of the Propagation of the Goſpel, did ſay a little more of him with regard to his Parentage, than was ſtrictly and literally true; what is that to the main Point? Does that make his Doctrines a worſe Syſtem of Morality? Does it deſtroy the Correſpondence between the Suggeſtions of Natural Religion, and the material Tenets of his? Does it prove the Practice of his Rules leſs conducive to the general Good of Mankind, or leſs proper and profitable Regulations for the Conduct of a civilized People? Was *Alexander* a leſs able Captain, or his Conqueſts leſs glorious, becauſe his Flatterers, in their mean Adulation, told a few Fables about his Birth; and in order to deify his Extraction on his Father's Side, ſaid, that *Jove* lay with his Mother in the Shape of a *Serpent*? All the wrangling and jangling upon the ſtrict literal Meaning of *Moſes* being inſpired; and the conteſting God's perſonal

Appearance to him on *Mount Sinai*, in order to depretiate *Moſes's* Wiſdom as a Legiſlator, is juſt as ridiculous.

Would it not be a ſenſeleſs Concluſion, and an abſurd way of arguing, to ſay, that the Laws of *Numa Pompilius* were good for nothing, and not well calculated to promote the growing Proſperity of his infant *Rome*, becauſe, in order to make them more willingly received by a ſuperſtitious People, he pretended they were dictated to him by a Divinity? Would his endeavouring to enhanſe their Value by giving them a Merit they had not, depretiate their true Worth, and take away the Merit they really had?

But not to go to remote Times or foreign Countries for Inſtances of this Sort, every body knows a recent Example of what I would intimate, by a home Incident: The Story of the Warming-pan was very proper to be given out and inculcated when the Revolution was but young; it had its Weight, induced many perhaps to come into the Revolution, and help'd the Cauſe of Liberty among ſome, whoſe dull Souls the Cauſe of Liberty alone would not have been ſufficient to fire and perſuade: But when the good Effects of the Revolution, and its beneficial Tendency to the Nation in general, came by Experience and long Trial to be felt; thoſe Frauds, that were neceſſary in its Commencement to deceive People into their own Good, became gradually quite uſeleſs; and no body now troubles his Head, nor has a long while, nor ever will again, whether the Pretender is, or is not an Impoſtor. It is ſufficient, that every one ſees and feels the Utility and Advantages of his having been once thought ſo: And whether ſome of thoſe Principles on which the Revolution, the Preſervation of the Conſtitution, and our preſent happy Eſtabliſhment were founded, be ſtill enthuſiaſtically believed, or now laugh'd at and exploded, it is no matter; for whatever the Cauſe was, the Effects are good; and ſince they are ſo, no body that has common Senſe, or common Prudence, would wiſh to alter the Government, whether it owes its Settlement, as to the Pretender's Birth, to Error or Truth.

But the Author of the *Minute Philoſopher* will be always inſiſting on the Points he ought never to touch; and perpetually introducing Reaſon, Probability, and ſuch ſort of Auxiliaries, to fight on his Side,

in

in Queſtions, where the Moment he brings them into the Field, they are ſure to deſert and turn againſt him. And in order, as he fancies, by theſe means, to ſhow his Dexterity and Ingenuity in maintaining what is hardeſt to defend, he runs the riſque of ruining his Cauſe, by fighting on the moſt diſadvantageous Ground he can pick out, and turning the Heat of the Battle to that Corner, where he muſt know himſelf weakeſt, and moſt vulnerable.

I muſt own, I conceived ſome Prejudice againſt his Book, from the moment I found it was written in Dialogue; tho', I know, that manner of writing has the Sanction of Antiquity for its Support, and great Names among the ancient Philoſophers to plead in its Behalf. But there never was any thing written in that way, (that ever I ſaw at leaſt) but what to me appears ſtiff, forced, and unfair. And as Unfairneſs is the Fault of all Faults in Polemical Writings, that muſt be moſt irkſome to every candid Reader; ſo all impartial People muſt be oftner ſhock'd and provoked at the Dialogue-Writer, than they can be at any other; as he is generally guilty of a double Injuſtice; whilſt, by exaggerating and miſrepreſenting both Sides of the Queſtion, he enhances the real Value of the one, and depretiates that of the other, with equal Sophiſtry.

Beſides theſe, there are two other Errors, one of which, all Dialogue-Writers are apt to fall into. The one is, making the Character they have a mind to prove in the wrong, talk ſo much as if he was in the right, that they find it a little difficult afterwards to refute him; which is manifeſtly the Caſe in the *Archbiſhop of Cambray's* Dialogue between the *Pyrhoniſt* and his *Neighbour*, upon *Scepticiſm*; and in that famous Paſſage in *Milton*, between *Raphael* and *Adam*, upon Foreknowledge and Free-will; for theſe Authors all along give the *Heterodox* Diſputant the beſt of the Argument, tho' they arbitrarily decide for the *Orthodox* Reaſoner at the laſt.

The other Error, ſo common to the Dialogue-Writers, is the *Scylla* to this *Charybdis*; for when they do not let the Diſputant they deſign to overthrow, argue ſo well, that they do not know how to make their

Heroe anſwer him; they make him talk ſo ill, and ſo like a driveling Fool, that no wiſe Man would take the Trouble of anſwering him at all.

The Author of the *Minute Philoſopher*, has, by a peculiar Felicity in his Method, found Means, (oppoſite as theſe Faults may ſeem) to unite them in his Performance: For tho' upon the whole, he ſeems determined to make *Alciphron* and *Lyeficles*, a Pair of moſt conſummate Coxcombs; yet as they now and then deviate from theſe Characters, and ſtumble upon ſome material, puzzling Truths; ſo he has made them, at different times, hold forth with ſo much Senſe, and ſo much Nonſenſe; ſo much Reaſon, and ſo much Abſurdity; ſo much Learning, and ſo much Ignorance; ſo much Wit, and ſo much Folly; and, in ſhort, ſo very well and ſo very ill; that the Dreſs theſe two Perſonages appear in, is as much a Patch-work, and as little Uniform, as a *Harlequin's Coat*; and for that Reaſon, upon Recollection, the propereſt Habit they can wear; ſince all the Uſe he ſeems to deſign them for, is mounting the Stage like a couple of *Merry-Andrews*, merely to ſet forth the Virtue and Value of all that wretched Stuff, which thoſe grave Quacks, *Euphranor* and *Crito*, endeavour to put off, and cram down your Throat, as a Specific for that epidemical, contagious, dangerous Diſeaſe of the preſent Times, which they call *Infidelity*.

I own, in deſcribing ſome of the Symptoms of this Diſtemper, and diſplaying the Cauſes of it, our Author often ſuggeſts a great deal of Truth; but then he ſticks ſo cloſe to the Mountebank's Character, when he comes to define the Cure, that his Receipt, like their Pills, is a mere *Noſtrum*; what no body underſtands but himſelf; and what every one who ſwallows, muſt ſwallow implicitly.

By this manner of proceeding therefore, he has ſtated *Scepticiſm*, and the ſtrongeſt Objections to our excellent Religion, in ſo clear a Light, that they are levell'd to almoſt the meaneſt Capacity, and comprehenſible to every common Reader; whilſt all the Anſwers to thoſe Objections, are ſo abſtruſe, ſo thin-ſpun, ſo wire-drawn, and ſo ſublimated, that to Heads leſs exalted in the Clouds, and Underſtandings more terreſtrial than his own, they are as unintelligible as the *Sibyll's*

Book, and no more calculated for univerſal Commerce and Apprehenſion, than the Confuſion of Languages at the *Tower of Babel.*

For my own Part, I confeſs, I have in many Places read him over and over again, in order to find out, if not what he did ſay, at leaſt what he deſigned to ſay; but I have never done it with Succeſs; the more I have conſider'd him, the more I have been bewilder'd; and the cloſer I have examined him, the leſs I have been ſatisfied. This, perhaps, he would tell me, was owing more to my want of Apprehenſion, than his want of Perſpicuity; and if he ſhould, I would be very ready to allow it; for I freely acknowledge, I have no very clear ſeparating, metaphyſical Head; and tho' *Euphranor* and *Crito* have brought me to believe all metaphyſical Points are definable, as Matter is diviſible, *ad infinitum*, yet I am no more able to penetrate into all the ſubtle Diſtinctions of theſe analizing Gentlemen with my coarſe Underſtanding, than I ſhould be to ſplit a Hair, or cleave a Grain of Sand with a common Hatchet.

I doubt not, but in anſwer to this, our Author would tell me, his Book was not written for ſuch illiterate, thick-ſcull'd Fellows as myſelf: But then I ſhould certainly reply, that if it was not, it can never anſwer the End he ſays he propoſed; ſince, as bad as my Head is, if he writes for the Bulk of the People, and will take Mankind at an Average, perhaps he will not find above a Tythe of them better qualify'd to be his Readers than myſelf. If therefore his Deſign was to ſtop the Growth of Infidelity, by giving warning to the Weak, and inſtructing the Ignorant, he has purſued it ill: And if this was not his Deſign, he prevaricates with the Publick, and affects a Merit to them, which he has no Pretence to; whilſt he ſat down to write, not influenc'd by the Zeal of an alarm'd *Chriſtian*, but prompted by the Vanity of an *Author*; and was more deſirous to engage our Admiration, than to avert our Danger.

But if he only wrote to the Learned, why did he not write, as Sir *Iſaac Newton* did his Principles, in *Latin?* that he might not perplex thoſe poor People, whom all theſe glaring Rays will dazzle, but never enlighten. Or if he did really write to the Multitude, why did he not

write

write in a Style, as well as a Language, which we can underſtand? Or at leaſt, why did he not make the Principles he would inſtil, as plain as thoſe he would eradicate; and the Arguments *for* Chriſtianity, as intelligible as thoſe *againſt it*.

It will be in vain for him to lay hold of this Confeſſion I have made; of not underſtanding his Book, in order to tell me, it is then abſurd and impertinent in me to find fault with it, and condemn it; that being the very Reaſon why I condemn it: It may be very fine, and very good in itſelf, but it may be *too* fine, and *too* good, to anſwer the End. Every Body muſt own, that the Step of a fine Dancer is more genteel and delicate than that of a *Foot-poſt*; but it makes no Way, and is no more fit for travelling, than *Metaphyſics* are for convincing; they are both pretty Amuſements, but neither of them of any Uſe; the one may entertain the Reader, and the other the Spectator; but the Performer, in both Caſes, after a great many uſeleſs Turns and ſhowing his Skill, ends juſt where he began, and leaves People juſt where he found them.

The *Minute Philoſopher*'s taking this refined Way of endeavouring to convince People, puts me in mind of a Story I once heard, of a Nobleman with a vaſt Fortune, ſome Prodigality, and no Averſion to Popularity; who, having a mind to outdo every body that had gone before him, and entertain the Freeholders of his County juſt before an Election, with ſome better Stuff than they had ever been uſed to upon the like Occaſion, reſolved to treat them all with *Champain*; the Conſequence of which was, that theſe Animals, who for a Quarter of the Expence in Port, and Ale, and Brandy, would have done any thing he bad them; ſpit out the *Champain*, ſhook their Heads, call'd it ſour Syder, and voted againſt him. Whoever attempts to perſuade and convince, in *Metaphyſics*, will have the ſame Fate: Nor can the *Minute Philoſopher* be angry with me for telling this Story, ſince my allowing it applicable, ſuppoſes his Reaſoning the *Champain* of its kind. And if any invidious Reader, to abuſe both him and me, ſhould ſay, that if the Nobleman had given his Mob *ſour Cyder*, and called it *Champain*, my Parallel would have been juſter, that is none of my Fault.

I own,

I own, for my own Part, I look upon the Claſs of metaphyſical Writers, as *Euphranor* ſays an ingenious *Florentine* did upon the Works of *Arioſto*, when he compared them to a Garden of Melons, where thoſe that are good, are excellent; but for one that is ſo, you meet with a thouſand that are good for nothing. How many *Minute Philoſophers*, H——ns, C——es, *and candid Examiners of Revelation*, does one drudge through and ſleep over, becauſe one has once taſted a *Locke*, a *Clarke*, and a *Chub*.

I have been told, that one of the beſt Metaphyſicians that ever wrote, being once aſk'd, whether he thought that it was poſſible to form any Propoſition in *Metaphyſics* that might not be very plauſibly controverted; he anſwer'd very fairly, that he believ'd not. How *Metaphyſics* then can be thought proper Spectacles to ſee the Chriſtian Religion through, and to illuſtrate Points that ought to be the Objects of univerſal Belief, is paſt my Comprehenſion.

I am ſo much of the Opinion of this great Man, that I never read any Metaphyſical Book upon Religion, which I did not think was either like *Woollaſton's Religion of Nature delineated*, a Series of Conſequences built on the ſandy Foundation of ſome very controvertible *Poſtulatum*; or elſe a Chain of Syllogiſms, Definitions, and Inferences, that, like a circular Line drawn a little excentrically, may go round and round a million of times, and never come to any Concluſion, but what will ſeem as abrupt at the laſt Round, as it would have done at the firſt.

By ſuch Arguers I have often been led through an ingenious, ſpeculative, entertaining, zig-zag Labyrinth of Words, where, from the Beginning to the End of a long *Folio*, I have been amuſed with a Diſſection of Terms, inſtead of an Explanation of Things; and a Syſtem of *Hypotheſes*, inſtead of a Plan for *Proof*.

Such Performers have often made me conſider fine Writers in *Metaphyſics* like fine Riders in a *Manage*; who certainly reverſe the original Uſe of Riding, as the others do of Writing: the Deſign of Riding being I ſuppoſe, to go with more Eaſe, and more Expedition, than one could on Foot; and of Writing, to explain one-ſelf to more People

than

than one has Opportunities of talking to. But as the *Metaphyſicians* are, by writing, only more deliberately verboſe, and more univerſally puzzling; ſo the Horſemen of this Claſs ſhow their Addreſs, their Skill, and their Dexterity, only by making their Horſe go backwards, or ſide-ways, or round, and all ways, with much more Trouble, as well as ſlower, than they could have gone on foot; and when they have ſweated, and puff'd, and labour'd round and round, for two or three Hours, the Standers-by cry, *It is very fine*; and theſe *Metaphyſical Jockies* get down juſt where they got up.

It is impoſſible to help ſeeing the *Minute Philoſopher*, in his *prancing* Performance, in this Light. I conſider him as *curveting* and *paſſaging*, in his logical, ſophiſtical *Manage:* And whilſt he is pawing, and ſnorting, and champing his Foam, and kicking, and throwing Dirt at *Scepticks*, *Schiſmaticks*, *Hereticks*, *Deiſts*, *Free-thinkers*, *Latitudinarians*, and *Atheiſts*, all in a Lump; I muſt own, he capers ſo much in Rule, turns ſo nimbly, and gives himſelf ſo much Agitation to ſo little purpoſe, that I think he is a *Metaphyſician* as compleatly *dreſs'd*, and as well *upon his Haunches*, as any I ever ſaw in my Life.

But ſince the *Minute Philoſopher* pretends his Book is written with an Intention only to adminiſter an Antidote to the Poiſon of Free-thinking, to give a Solution to the Doubts of modern Sceptics, and ſtop the Apoſtacy of the preſent Times; why does he immediately, in his firſt Dialogue, by a quick Gradation, (not to be parallel'd by any thing but Sir *John Falſtaff*'s Account of his ſixteen Men in *Buckram*) work up his Free-thinkers into avow'd, confirm'd *Atheiſts?* Will any body pretend to affirm gravely, that *Atheiſm* is the Error of this Age, and the Characteriſtic of a modern *Free-thinker?* And if it is not; if there is not one *Atheiſt* in a Million of *Free-thinkers*, or perhaps not one Atheiſt among them all, will it not be very natural for every one of thoſe Patients, to whom this Doctor deſigns to preſcribe, to ſay he miſtakes their Caſe, and does not know their Diſtemper: That he writes Bills, and gives Medicines for one Diſeaſe, when they complain of another; and that conſequently they ſhall let all

that

that Trumpery-ſtuff he ſends them, lie untouch'd upon their Shelf? If I had a few Spots of the *Scurvy*, or ſome ſlight cutaneous Eruptions upon the Surface of my Body, and a Man ſhould tell me he had a Specifick for the Plague, and adviſe me to take his naſty Compound; ſhould I ſwallow it, or naturally tell him, that as I had not the Plague, his nauſeous Drugs would be of no uſe to me?

Yet this is the manner of the *Minute Philoſopher*; he deals with all his Patients as I have heard the *Montpelier Doctors* do with theirs: If you come to them for Advice for any Diſtemper whatever, that is incidental to a human Body; they cry immediately, *Sir, you are pox'd*; *Sir, you muſt flux.* If you ſwear till you are black in the Face, that you never had to do with a Woman in your Life, it is all one: Then they cry it is hereditary, and that you are infected without knowing it; whilſt the Burden of their Song is ſtill, *You are pox'd, and muſt flux.*

This Author inſiſting upon all Free-thinkers being Atheiſts, is a *Poſtulatum* exactly in the Style with that of the *Montpelier-Doctors*; with this Difference only in the Conſequence, that if it were ſo, they could cure you of the one; whereas, if he has nothing better than what he has produced, to apply to the other, he would leave every Body juſt as ſick as he found them.

The Argument *Crito* makes uſe of in the tenth Section of this firſt Dialogue, for indulging People in their Belief of a future State, and the Immortality of the Soul, is certainly a good one; and his Quotation from *Tully* is very properly apply'd. But all this is ſaying nothing at all for the Certainty, nor even for the Probability of a future State. His Inference from theſe Arguments can only be, that if People are ſo lucky to feed themſelves with ſuch Hopes, and enjoy ſuch a Perſuaſion, it would be extremely unkind in thoſe who are not ſo ſanguine, to endeavour to diſpoſſeſs them of ſo much Pleaſure, by trying to eradicate the Seeds of ſo flattering an Opinion.

Let this be granted; but what then? If I had been the Madman who fancied all the Ships in the Harbour of *Athens* his own, I ſhould not perhaps have thank'd the *Doctor-Hales* of that Country for

curing me of the Deluſion: But becauſe that poor Fellow might be happy in it, I would not go about aſſuring other People they were in the wrong for not trying to be all as mad as him; nor would I pronounce, becauſe the Fallacy of that Opinion was more agreeable than Truth, that therefore it was not Fallacy. Such Ways of arguing hurt the Cauſe he means to defend, by inducing People to imagine, that there are no better Arguments to ſupport it: And I aſſure the *Minute Philoſopher*, I am as far from being of that Claſs, who treat the Immortality of the Soul, and a Future State, as *a Caſtle in the Air*, and a little Reverſion in *Eutopia*, as I am from thinking he has taken the proper Methods to refute and convert thoſe who are.

At the latter end of the 12th Section in this Dialogue, when he mentions the frequent Neglect of ſaying *Grace* before and after Meat, as one of the enormons Crimes conſequent to Free-thinking, and an Inſtance of the increaſing Licentiouſneſs of the Age, one would imagine (as *Cæſar* ſays of *Caſſius* in the Play) that he mock'd himſelf, and meant to turn his own Cenſures into Ridicule; ſince no one Inſtitution for Divine Worſhip, perhaps, is more liable to Objection, than this, eſpicially as we uſe it; for the addreſſing ourſelves to Heaven, every time we ſit down to a Table heap'd with unneceſſary Slaughter, and luxurious Profuſion, becauſe Food is neceſſary for our Support, ſeems to me no more a reaſonable Act of Chriſtian Piety, than it would be for any intemperate *Whoremonger* to throw up a little Hymn of Praiſe in a *Bawdy-Houſe*, becauſe the World would ceaſe without the Uſe of Women.

If our Author thinks *Grace* neceſſary to our Food, becauſe we cannot ſubſiſt without it; it is certain, we can as little ſubſiſt without getting rid of it; and conſequently, a Grace of Thanks to God would be juſt as proper after its *Exit*, as before its *Entrance*; nay more ſo; becauſe we are ſure it is allowable, by the Laws of Self-Preſervation, to diſburden ourſelves of it when it is there; whereas it is much more diſputable whether we have a Right to aſſaſſinate all thoſe poor Animals, which our Taſte prompts us to deſtroy, and which nothing but being inured by Cuſtom could perhaps have brought us to ſuch a

Pitch

Pitch of Cruelty, as to be able to deſtroy without Remorſe or Reflection: To ſuch Practices it is ſo far from being clear that *Grace* is a proper Accompanyment, that I believe there are many who might doubt, whether it is not adding to the Crime of all the ſuperfluous Murders, of Intemperance and Luxury, as it is making God Almighty a Party to that Crime, whilſt we pretend to ſuppoſe the Effects of our own Violences, Injuſtices, and Gluttony, are nothing more than a fulfilling of his Will, and a grateful Acceptance of his Donations.

If we ſhould ſee a *Cannibal*, or a *Hottentot*, drinking the Blood, mangling the Fleſh, and tearing out the Guts of a human Creature; if we ſhould ſee him performing this murderous, butcherly Ceremony upon his Knees, and thanking Heaven all the while for its Bounty, in delivering this unfortunate Being into his Hands, and providing it for the Gratification of his Appetite; what ſhould we think of him? And if there are many People, who doubt our having a better Right to kill a Chicken, than the *Cannibal* has to kill one of us; how ſhocking and how abſurd muſt it appear to ſuch People, to ſee Men, who pretend to Devotion, preach Temperance, and profeſs Equity, Compaſſion, and Benevolence to their Fellow-Creatures, lifting up their Eyes to Heaven, and thanking God for having put it in their Power to do that, for which they ought rather to aſk his Forgiveneſs, deprecate his Wrath, and implore his Mercy?

To imagine that God Almighty, in filling the Earth, the Air, and the Sea, with ſuch Variety and Multitudes of Animals, acted only in the Character of *Butcher*, *Poulterer* and *Fiſhmonger* to Mankind, is not having any very exalted Idea of his Occupations, tho' it is having a very high one of our own Dignity and Importance: And if this was not his Deſign in theſe Productions, and that we only interpret the natural Power we have to deſtroy them, a natural Right, it is mocking God Almighty, to put this ſacred, devout Face on ſo cruel and unjuſt a Proceeding; and a Band of hungry Highway-men, who ſtop a Stage-Coach in order to plunder, rob, and murder the Paſſengers, may with equal Reaſonableneſs, when they begin this Operation, lift up their Eyes and Hands to Heaven, and bleſs God's holy Name, for

 having

having created these Passengers to their Use, provided the Stage-Coach for their Wants, and deliver'd it into their Hands.

The second Dialogue, design'd chiefly for an Answer to *the Fable of the Bees*; is, in my Opinion, as chicaning, as loose, and as unfair, as any other Part of this incoherent Medley: For instead of answering what *the Author of the Fable of the Bees* really says, he supposes him to have said Things which he does not say, and answers them; which is carrying his Zeal for *Orthodoxy*, and his *Knight-Errantry* against *Free-thinkers* and *Free-writers* so far, that it puts one a little in mind of *Don Quixote*, who fancy'd he saw Giants and Magicians in every Passenger he met upon the Road; and by this means, (never seeing any thing in its true Light, or calling any thing by its true Name) was perpetually fighting with *Phantoms* of his own raising, and the unsubstantial *Scare-crows* of his own disturb'd Imagination.

The Letter to *Dion*, which you sent me among these other Books, amply sets forth the want of Candor in the *Minute Philosopher*, with regard to *the Author of the Fable of the Bees*; who therein defends himself with that Life, Wit, Spirit, good Humour, and Pleasantness, which every Body must allow to be the Characteristics of all his Writings. But at the same time that this *wanton Author* exposes the Sophistry of his Commentator, I cannot say he makes use of none in the Defence of his own Text. His Explanation of the Title of his Book is forc'd; and his Apology for that Part of it, relating to publick Stews, very lame: There are many more Instances one might give of the same Kind; but as my Design now is not to criticise the Letter-writer, I shall not expatiate farther on those Passages where he has aim'd at justifying himself without doing it: That I think the *Minute Philosopher*, in his manner of attacking *the Fable of the Bees*, equally injudicious and unfair, is all I meant to say; and if there were no other Answer to be given to this Book, than what he has given, any candid Reader must conclude it unanswerable.

The Author of the Letter to Dr. *Waterland*, when he condemns the Manner in which that *cool*, *candid* Divine went about to answer

*Christianity*

*Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, adds a little Sketch of the Manner in which he ought to have anſwer'd it; and if you will allow me the Liberty of a ſhort Digreſſion, I will, in a very few Words, do the ſame thing with regard to the *Minute Philoſopher*, and *the Fable of the Bees*.

In the firſt Place, I would not have deny'd, but that the Author of the *Fable of the Bees* had told a great many Truths; but I would have ſaid, and have proved too, that he had (like *Rochefoucault*) told a great many diſagreeable ones, and what are much leſs fit to be told, than if they were not Truths.

I would have ſaid, that his endeavouring to ſhow, that People do Actions they have reaſon to be proud of, from Motives, which if nicely ſcrutinized, they would have reaſon to be aſhamed of, will never contribute to the multiplying ſuch Actions; and that if Actions, which are beneficial to Mankind and Society, often proceed from the ſame Principles with ſome that are detrimental, it would be more for the Benefit of the World, to have ſuch Sources lie conceal'd; as the Diſcovery of theſe two Streams, flowing from the ſame Fountain, will take away one of the chief Inducements many People have for doing what is good; which is the Pride and the Vanity of being thought to act upon better, nobler, and more laudable Principles than their Neighbours.

If it could be proved, that *Heroſtratus*, who fired the Temple of *Epheſus*, and *Decius*, who threw himſelf, for the ſake of his Country, into the Gulph that open'd in *Rome*, acted both from the ſame Motive, and were equally influenced by the Vanity of being mentioned in Hiſtory, and perpetuating their Names to Poſterity, for as long as thoſe of *Rome* and *Epheſus* ſhould be known; if this, I ſay, could be demonſtrated, I would be glad to aſk the Author of the *Fable of the Bees*, whether he thinks it would promote and encourage that Virtue call'd *the Love of one's Country*, to ſhew, that the moſt renown'd Patriot in Antiquity, and the moſt infamous *Incendiary*, were in the ſame Way of Thinking, and actuated by the ſame Paſſion? If it would not, the Concluſion is obvious; and he muſt either allow, that it would be an improper Topic for Speculation to examine ſuch a

Propoſition,

Propoſition, and of Diſſervice to any Community to prove it; or he muſt deny, that the Spirit of *Patriotiſm* is of any Uſe to that Society where it is moſt in Force.

Neither can I agree with the Author of the *Fable of the Bees*, even in the fundamental Principles of his whole Book, which is, *that private Vices are publick Benefits.* I do not mean, that I cannot agree with him according to the ludicrous Expoſition he has made of it, in his Letter to *Dion*; but as he has really explained it by the Tenor, Scope, and Drift of the whole original Book.

If he went no farther, than to ſay that Luxury is inſeparable from what is call'd a rich, flouriſhing Nation; and that a proſperous People are generally vicious in proportion to their Proſperity; perhaps his Aſſertion might be too well founded: But when he ſays their Vices and their Luxury (in order to take off the Odium of theſe two Names) are the Occaſion of their Wealth and their Proſperity, I think he miſtakes, and carries his Encomiums on Vice and Luxury too far: For tho' Luxury is too often the Conſequence of Proſperity, I cannot agree, that it is always the Source of it: I think it is the *Child* of Proſperity, but not the *Parent*; and that the Vices which *grow* upon a flouriſhing People, are not the Means by which they *became ſo.*

The *Romans* were originally a hardy, rough, robuſt, warlike, induſtrious People; from their Induſtry and Hardineſs, they grew powerful; from being powerful, they grew rich; from their Riches, they grew luxurious and vicious; and from a long Courſe of Vice and Luxury, they degenerated ſtill further, into the moſt ſcandalous Corruption, and the moſt abandon'd Profligacy; till at laſt this Degeneracy (enervated as they were, both in Body and Mind) brought them to Slavery, Decay, and Ruin.

But by this Gradation, it ſhould ſeem to me, not that they were rich and flouriſhing, becauſe they were vicious and luxurious; but that they were vicious and luxurious, from being rich and flouriſhing; and that this Progreſs, from Lowlineſs to Grandeur, and from Grandeur to Decay, ſhews, tho' their Vices proceeded from their Opulence, yet their Opulence proceeded from their Virtues; and that *Luxury* laid the Foundation, not of their Proſperity, but of their Ruin.

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The ſame Progreſs that appears in the Revolution and Viciſſitude of this great State, may be often ſeen too in the Fortunes of particular People. A laborious, ingenious, induſtrious Man of low Birth grows rich; his Riches produce Plenty; Plenty, Indulgence; Indulgence, Repletion; and Repletion, Lazineſs and Diſeaſes. And it would be juſt as fair, and as well reaſon'd, to ſay, that this Man's Diſeaſes, which were the Effects of his Riches, were the Occaſion of them; as to ſay, that the Luxury and Vices of a State, which are the Fruits of its Proſperity, are the Seeds of it.

So much for *The Fable of the Bees*. I ſhall now return to the *Minute Philoſopher*; but as it would be tedious both to you and me, ſhould I follow this irregular, dodging Leader, through all the wild twiſting Paths into which he wanders, in the Courſe of what he calls Reaſoning; and examine every Dialogue ſeparately; ſo I ſhall only curſorily touch on ſome of thoſe Points, which I think the groſſeſt Defects, and the moſt glaring Abſurdities, of this Performance.

And as he aſſures us, that his Book (if it goes no further) is at leaſt an irrefragable Anſwer to *Atheiſm*; I cannot, without ſome little Notice, paſs over his fourth Dialogue, where he ſeems to lay the whole Streſs of his Argument; and to think he has put the Demonſtration of a God in ſo much a clearer Light, than any Body ever ſet it to View before.

The Treatiſe from whence this Quinteſſence of Proof is extracted, was, I think, publiſh'd in a detach'd Piece, by Way of *an Eſſay upon Viſion*, ſeveral Years ago; and, if I miſtake not, the Effect it then had upon Mankind was, that the *Ignorant* ſtared, and the *Learned* laugh'd. However, this Reception did not diſcourage him from a Republication; nor will the Republication, I fancy alter the Reception: *The Author*, and *the Publick*, will both of them think juſt as they did; the one will not have a worſe Opinion of it, nor the other a better; and according to the *Doxology*, *As it was in the Beginning, is now, and ever ſhall be*, &c.

If inſtead of a Revival of this Eſſay, he had only figuratively ſaid by way of Text, to his Proofs of a God, that *every Thing we ſee ſpeaks one*; he would have ſaid what thouſands have ſaid before; what every Body would

would have comprehended, and almoſt every Body have allowed: But when in order to vary the Phraſe, and ſtrike out ſomething new, he tells us, *God ſpeaks to our Eyes in every Thing we ſee, and that Form and Figure anſwer to Sound and Articulation*; from the Affectation of *Novelty*, he falls into *Obſcurity*; and in order to ſay Things, which no Body but himſelf ever *ſaid*, he ſays them in a Manner which no Body but himſelf can ever *underſtand*.

The only Part of his Explication of this Theſis, that is within my Comprehenſion, does not ſeem to me, I own, much to the Honour of God; and the reſt of it, is as little ſo: I am glad, for the Sake of the Cauſe, his Arguments are not more intelligible.

For if any body was to ſay of me, what he ſays of God Almighty, that the Uſe I make of Language is to deceive; that I take Advantage of People's not ſeeing well at a Diſtance, to miſrepreſent Things; or of their not hearing well, to miſreport them: If I was to tell People, as *Euphranor* or *Crito* (I have forgot which) ſays God Almighty tells us, *that ſquare Things are round; and that vaſt, rough, opake Bodies, were little, ſmooth, luminous Things, no bigger than Six-pences:* I fancy when thoſe I converſed with had experimentally often diſcover'd, that this was my common Practice, and that I ſeldom told them a Word of Truth; they would be apt to call me a great Liar, warn every Body not to believe me, and ſay nothing but a Fool would ever mind a Word I ſaid.

Yet if God Almighty would avow the *Minute Philoſopher* for his Interpreter, this is the manner in which that pious Author tells us God talks to his Creatures; and this the Hinge on which that orthodox Demonſtrator makes the whole Proof of the Being of a *God* to turn.

The beſt Anſwer that can be given to this ſyſtematical Rhapſody, I think, is *Euphranor's* own Words at the ſumming of it up. *Alcyphron* firſt very naturally obſerves, *that this ſtrange Language affects People but little.* To which *Euphranor* replies, *The Reaſon of that is, that it is familiar to us, and that Frequency leſſens our Admiration of things, tho' in themſelves never ſo admirable.* Then follows (*Euphranor* ſtill ſpeaking) what I ſhould think would have ſuited much better the ſneering Part of *Lyſicles's* Character: *Hence a common Man, who*

*is not uſed to think and make Reflexions, would probably be more convinced of the Being of a God, by one ſingle Sentence heard once in his Life from the Sky, than by all the Experience he has had of this viſual Language, ſo conſtantly addreſs'd to his Eyes, and ſo plainly declaring the Nearneſs, Wiſdom, and Providence of him with whom we have to do.*

I agree entirely in this Opinion with *Euphranor*; I freely own my ſelf one of theſe *common Men*, and believe Mankind in general made up of ſuch *common Men*, that I cannot imagine there is one ſo *uncommon* (not excepting the Author of the *Minute Philoſopher* himſelf) as not to be more ſenſibly affected with *that ſingle Sentence from the Sky*, which would want no Interpreter, than with all this viſual Language; which, even after his Interpretation, wants a Dictionary as much as it did before it: For, as Mr. *Locke* ſays of *Pere Malbranche's Recherche de la Verité: As there are many Expreſſions herein, which carry with them no clear Idea to my Mind, they are likely to remove but little of my Ignorance by their Sound.*

The Story of the *Fox-Chace*, with the Deſcription of the Sportſmen, at the Beginning of the fifth Dialogue, is as well ſet forth, as it is ill-placed; no body could have told the Story better, or have apply'd it worſe. For what has it to do there? It is juſt as improper, and as foreign to the Subject where he has put it, as the Figures of a *Dog* and a *Fox*, and Men with *long Whips*, *ſhort Wigs*, and *dirty Boots*, would be in a Picture of *the School of* Athens, or *the laſt Supper*.

In the dreſſing a rural Scene, I confeſs him excellent; *Claude Lorrain* never drew more romantic Landſkips; *inamel'd Meads*, *leafy Groves*, *bubbling Springs*, *harmleſs Flocks*, and *fertile Plains*. In ſhort, all *Paſtoral Painting* ſeems ſo well adapted to his Genius, that if a Supplement was to be written to *Aſtrea*, or *Pembroke's Arcadia*, I know *no Philoſopher* in the World ſo fit for ſuch an Undertaking, as the *Minute Philoſopher*.

And, if weary of *metaphyſical Novels*, he ſhould ever turn his Pen to *any* of a ſofter Kind; if from the Luxuriancy of his Imagination, and Love of Variety, he ſhould change the Style of his *Romances*,

from the *Philoſophic* to the *Tender*; from theological *Opinion*, to amourous *Sentiments*, and inſtead of treating of *Schoolmen* and *Free-thinkers*, ſhould write of *ſighing Nymphs* and *perjur'd Swains*; the Sale of his *Minute Philoſopher* would be ſuch a Trifle to the Profits of this Production, that for Two Editions of the one, there would be Twenty of the other: Not a *Greenſickneſs Girl*, nor an *idle School-boy*, but would have him in their Hand; and ſo differently would his Readers treat him in a Performance of that ſort, that I dare ſay no body would begin it, that would not read it out.

All that *Alciphron* ſays upon *Grace*, at the Beginning of the laſt Dialogue, is ſenſible, and little of a piece with what is put into his Mouth in the ſubſequent Part of it, where his Prompter ſeems afraid of letting him maintain it. A reaſonable *Chineſe*, on whom the Light of the Goſpel had yet but dawn'd, whoſe Eyes were not yet quite open'd by *Grace* to the broad Sunſhine of Conviction, would, I fancy, talk juſt ſo to ſome *Miſſionary*, who had got no farther in his Converſion, than telling him *what* he was to believe, without having yet produced the irreſiſtible Reaſons we have to give *why* he ſhould believe it.

All that *Euphranor* and *Crito* alledge, by way of Anſwer to *Alciphron* on this Head, in their Parallel between *Grace* and *Force*, is very ingenious, perhaps, but in my Opinion very inſufficient. Wha they ſay (if I comprehend it) amounts to no more than this: *You ſee* (ſay they) *all the various Effects of Force; and ſince without having any abſtract Idea of Force, you will, from its Operations, allow there is ſuch a thing, why will you not, from the ſame way of reaſoning, admit of ſuch a thing as Grace?*

For my part, I am fully convinc'd there is ſuch a thing as *Grace*, but not by this Argument; and therefore, had I been *Alciphron*, inſtead of ſaying, as he does, that *I do not know what to think of it*; I would certainly have made this Anſwer: " That the Reaſon why I admit " there is ſuch a thing as *Force*, and doubt whether there is any ſuch " thing as *Grace*, is, becauſe I can impute the Operations of *Force* " to no Cauſe but *Force*; whereas what they would tell me are the

Effects

" Effects of *Grace*, may be aſcribed to almoſt as many different " Cauſes, as we ſee Effects. As for Example: People may pray from " *Timidity*, as well as *Grace*; they may reverence *God's Miniſters* from " *Ignorance*, as well as *Grace*; they may be charitable from *Oſtenta-* " *tion*, as well as *Grace*; *honeſt* (as many are diſhoneſt) from *Policy* " and *Intereſt*, as well as *Grace*; and may without *Grace* even be " *good Chriſtians* in *England*, as they would have been *good Maho-* " *metans*, if they had been born in *Turky*; from *Education*, *Accident*, " and *implicit Credulity*.

But to enumerate all the Places, where he makes theſe abſurd Diſputants, *Alciphron* and *Liſicles*, give the worſt Anſwers they can to ſupport what they have advanced, would be endleſs. It would be equally tedious, to produce all the Inſtances of his making them ſay things, which perhaps other People might ſay of them, but which it is impoſſible to imagine they could be ſuch Fools to ſay of themſelves.

*Lyſicles* ſays in praiſe of Free-thinking, in the 24th Section of the ſecond Dialogue, that *among the Women, it has introduced, inſtead of thoſe old faſhion'd things, Prayers and the Bible, the grateful Amuſements of Drams, Dice, and Billet-doux; and that the fair Sex have now nothing to do, but to dreſs and paint, drink and game, adorn and divert themſelves.*

Now ſuppoſing the Doctrines of any miſtaken Advocate for Liberty, did lead directly to this Degree of Libertiniſm and Licentiouſneſs; I wou'd be glad to aſk, whether any Man of common Senſe believes ſuch a one would, in order to gain Proſelytes to his Opinion, ſhow the Tendency and Conſequences of it in this Light? And if this were true, whether it is a Truth which an Enemy, or a Friend to Free-thinking, would expoſe?

It is full as improbable, that any Fellows ſhould be ſo abſurdly infatuated, as to acknowledge, that their only Reaſon for not admitting the Validity of any Doctrine, was its being *handed down from their Anceſtors, received by moſt of their Contempories, eſtabliſh'd by Law, and ſupported by Authority*; yet at the winding up of the Diſpute, when theſe two Combatants have nothing farther to object, they ſtill

refuſe to yield; tho' they acknowledge theſe to be the only Motives they have left, for controverting or exploding any of the main Tenets of the Chriſtian Religion; the Truth and Beauty of which, their two *able Antagoniſts*, have with ſo much Method, Learning, and Perſpicuity, progreſſively and unanſwerably demonſtrated.

I will expatiate no farther on Particulars; but for fear you ſhould find my incoherent Comment, as unintelligible as his incoherent Text; and a Meaning as hard to be extracted out of the one, as the other; I ſhall, in a few very ſhort Heads, recapitulate the Subſtance of all I meant to ſuggeſt in theſe Remarks:

*Firſt*, That as the *Minute Philoſopher* profeſſes writing to the *Free-thinkers* of the preſent Age, he ſhould have left *Atheiſm* quite out of the Queſtion; becauſe it is not the Error of theſe Times.

*Secondly*, That if it were, he is likelier (by telling People, *his* are the beſt Arguments to prove a God) to make, than to convert *Atheiſts*.

*Thirdly*, That *Metaphyſics* are an improper Method to take for the ſupport of *Chriſtianity*; becauſe whatever is deſigned for common Uſe, ſhould be levell'd to common Apprehenſions, and whatever is to be univerſally received, ought to be univerſally underſtood.

*Fourthly*, That as *Metaphyſics* are generally the moſt obſcure of all Writings, ſo his Writings are the moſt obſcure of all *Metaphyſics*.

And *Laſtly*, That by his Manner of handling every Propoſition, he always does one of theſe three Things: He either begs the Queſtion by ſome arbitrary Deciſion at the End of the Diſpute, which he had juſt as good a Right to make at the Beginning of it; (as in the 16th Section of the firſt Dialogue; and the 2d of the fifth) or he puzzles and perplexes the Queſtion ſo much, that no Body can pick out any Deciſion at all, (as in his viſual Language;) or elſe, he inadvertently gives up the Queſtion, by ſome Slip in the Courſe of his

Reaſoning, which he can never afterwards retrieve: The ſtrongeſt Inſtance that can be given of this Sort of Blunder, is when *Euphranor* ſays to *Alciphron*, *Pray hold, and let me ſee if I underſtand you; for if your Foundation is not clear, and your Premiſes what I comprehend, I ſhall never admit any Concluſions or Conſequences from them, tho' never ſo juſtly drawn.*

I defy any *Free-thinker*, in ſo few Words, to make a ſtronger Objection to *the whole Syſtem of Chriſtianity:* What more forcible can be urged in behalf of *Sceptical* inquiſitive Minds? What can ſtrike deeper into the Tenets and Doctrines of a Religion, whoſe *Foundation* is *Myſtery*; and whoſe *Premiſes*, the *Trinity in Unity*, the *immaculate Conception*, the *mortal Immortality*, and the *coeval Exiſtence of a Father and a Son.*

I have protracted theſe Reflections far beyond the common Limits of a Letter: But as I take this ſtrange Book to be an inexhauſtible Fund for Ridicule and Objection; ſo I muſt acknowledge theſe Remarks (long as they are) to be rather Hints for an Anſwer, than a full Anſwer to it. And tho' a lonely, idle, Country Life, may in ſome Meaſure have been the occaſion of my extending the Trouble I have given you to this unconſcionable Length; yet remember you drew that Trouble on your ſelf, by ſetting me to work; conſequently I have a Right to have it look'd upon, not as the Effects of an impertinent Propenſity to give my Opinion, but as a Proof of my implicit Obedience to your Commands. I am,

*Dear Sir*, &c.

FINIS.